

# Fathers on parental leave

In recent years, a significant shift has occurred in family leave policies, moving away from mother-specific leaves and transitioning towards "gender-neutral" parental leaves, with a particular focus on father-specific leaves, including not only a birth-related paternity leave but also a father's quota intended to be used independently. The primary goal of this shift has been to redefine the organization of care responsibilities within families, as well as to achieve various indirect objectives, including increased maternal employment rates and the cultivation of closer father-child relationships. Furthermore, this transition has been motivated by the findings of previous studies, which highlight the positive effects of paternity leave uptake on families and societies. These effects encompass, for example, improved partnership satisfaction, enhanced family stability, extended fertility, and better academic performance among children.

Despite the well-intentioned objectives and the ongoing development of more extensive father-specific paternal leaves, empirical evidence consistently reveals that fathers' utilization of parental leave remains relatively low. This phenomenon persists even in countries with comprehensive leave legislation that guarantees fathers both an independent right to take parental leave as well as generous leave entitlements. Numerous studies have delved into fathers' leave utilization and the multifaceted factors associated with it. Beyond the design of parental leave policies, fathers' leave uptake has been found to be influenced by various sociodemographic and economic characteristics. Moreover, workplace-related factors, organizational culture, social norms, and gender role expectations also play significant roles in shaping fathers' decisions regarding parental leave.

This presentation aims to provide an overview of the causes and consequences related to fathers' uptake of parental leave. In addition, I will present new findings concerning fathers' parental leave uptake in the context of Finland.

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